

THE ENTHUSIAST

Nicholas Mortimer

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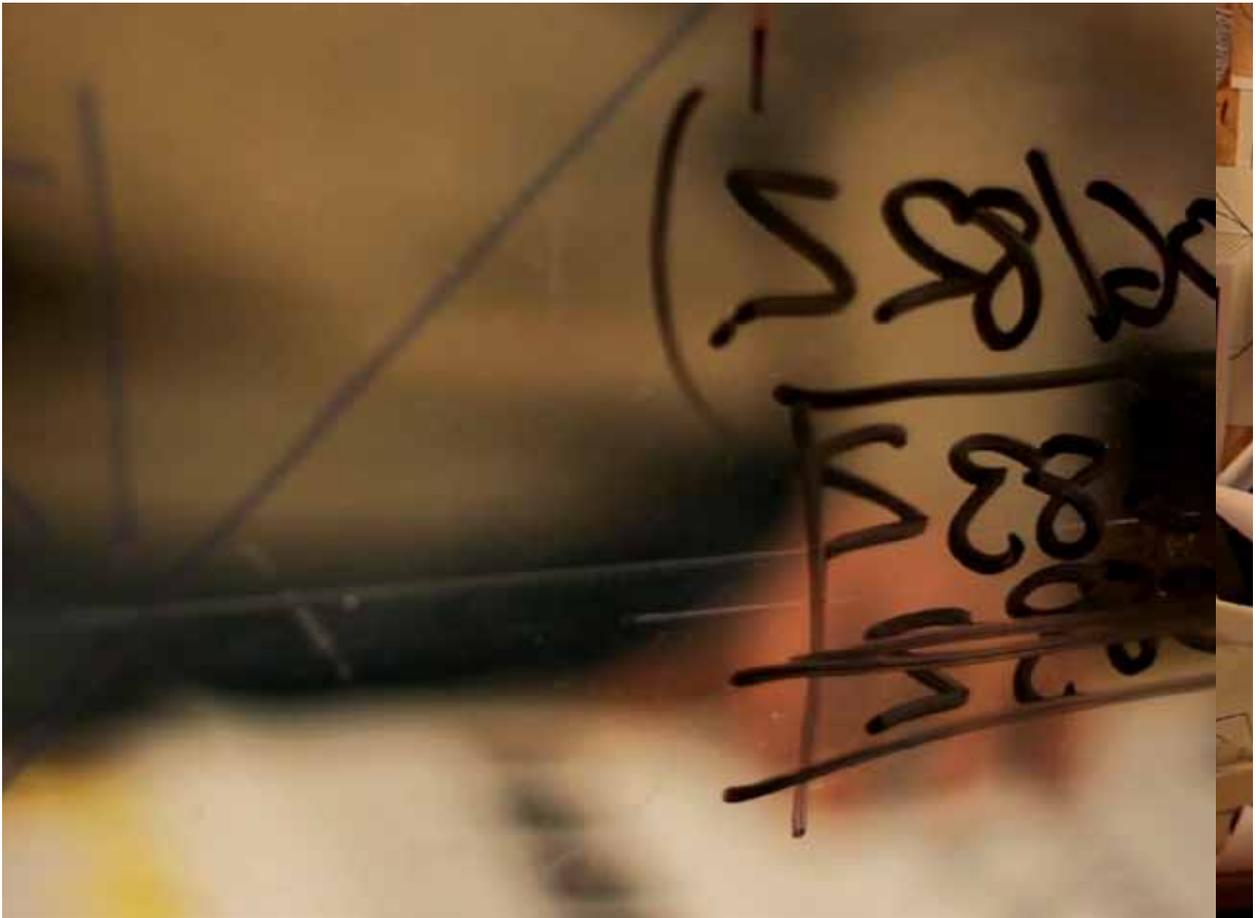


*DROLL THING LIFE IS /
THAT MYSTERIOUS
ARRANGEMENT
OF MERCILESS LOGIC
FOR A FUTILE
PURPOSE.
THE MOST YOU CAN
HOPE FOR IS SOME
KNOWLEDGE
OF YOURSELF /
THAT COMES
TOO LATE /
A CROP OF
INEXTINGUISHABLE REGRETS*

JOSEPH CONRAD
Heart of Darkness (1899)

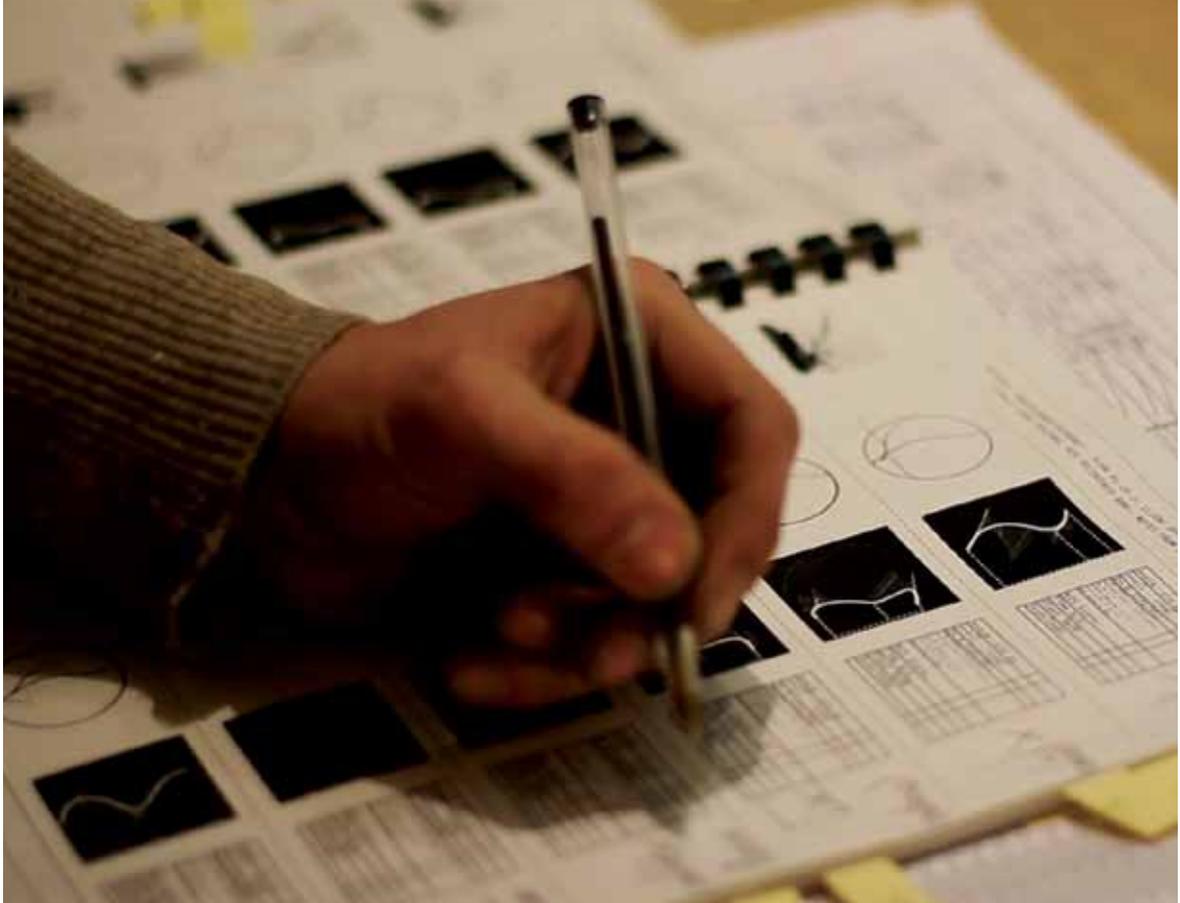








THE ENTHUSIAST





THE ENTHUSIAST

NICHOLAS MORTIMER (2013)

SINGLE CHANNEL HD VIDEO : 6 MINS 22 SECONDS



1

*SCIENCE + DESIGN
ART + RULES*

2

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

3

*SELECTED TEXT :
AGAINST NATURE
J K HUYSMANS*

4

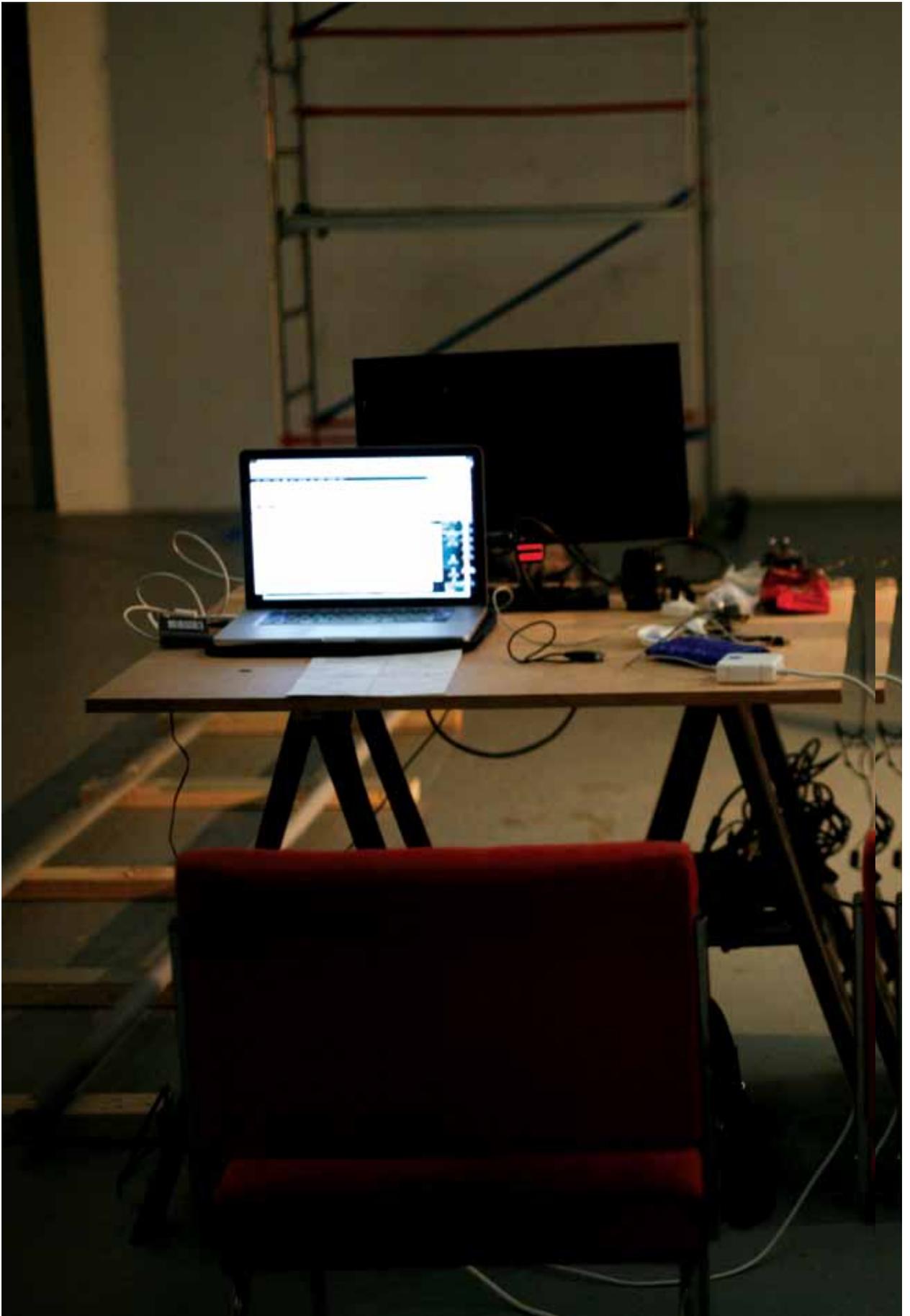
*TIMELINE -
IKEBANA VS NEUROSCIENCE*

5

*INVESTIGATION -
RATIONALISING
THE SUBJECTIVE*

6

CREDITS



*I. SCIENCE + DESIGN
RULES + ART*



Fig. 7.

SCIENCE + DESIGN + RULES + ART

Today, data visualization continues to grow in popularity as we find ourselves surrounded by an increasing number of representations of increasing amounts of information. Graphs and charts have been turned into 'interactive' montages on new and existing media, and computational graphic design has found itself responsible for describing the seemingly infinite amount of data that continues to flourish in the post digital revolution.

The creation of forms to describe informational events is not new, designing around facts to create art forms has existed for millennia, but the speculative mingling of empirical values, artistic outcomes and a need to define hard to grasp concepts has perhaps operated on a different level to the humble pie chart.

Two examples are exposed in this accompaniment to *'The Enthusiast'* both revealing personal endeavours, pursuits of defining and organising hidden forms of information and new ways to view what we call reality.

In 1897 a book was published of Benjamin Betts theory on the relationship between mathematical principles and human consciousness, illustrating a physical form to a variety of different emotional scales e.g.; the impulse of duty, or negative morality. 'Geometrical Psychology' is a fascinating document on 17th century metaphysical thought, offering a historical insight into the study of the human mind, psychology and a post enlightenment hunger for investigation and rationalising subjective experiences. The accompanying text by Louisa. S. Cook sets the scene for Bett's translation of consciousness:

"Mr Betts felt that consciousness is the only act that we can study directly, since all other objects of knowledge must be perceived through consciousness. Mathematical form, he considers, is the first reflection and most pure image of our subjective activity. Then follows number, having a code relation to linear conception. Hence mathematical form with number provides the fittest symbols for what Mr Betts calls "The Science of Representation" the orderly representation by a system of symbolism of the spiritual evolution of life, plane after plane. "Number" Philo said, "is the mediator between the corporeal and the incorporeal." (i)

Beyond what is written in complement to the theories that Betts proposes (the complexity of which reads like an academic Borges novel) the diagrams themselves offer an aesthetic value which can be experienced immediately, and present a way to view mental states which although abstract in their form, convey a subtlety which enables us to contemplate the construction of human consciousness. What Betts produced can be viewed with hindsight as a wonderful combination of speculative design, drawing on high level thinking of the day to form illustrations, which can be enjoyed without the need to understand or appreciate the full weight of the theories and calculations. We witness a bizarre collaboration between science and design, describing a felt reality with a rigour, seemingly creating a solution for the viewer.

Having been given certain codes to read human psychology with, we find that Betts has arranged the data into compositions which allow us to experience these ideas in an abstract and aesthetic form which bring to life

Ω ω 10.3 H ϕ 3 χ^2 ϕ 2.15
 α 11.0 F B
A⁵

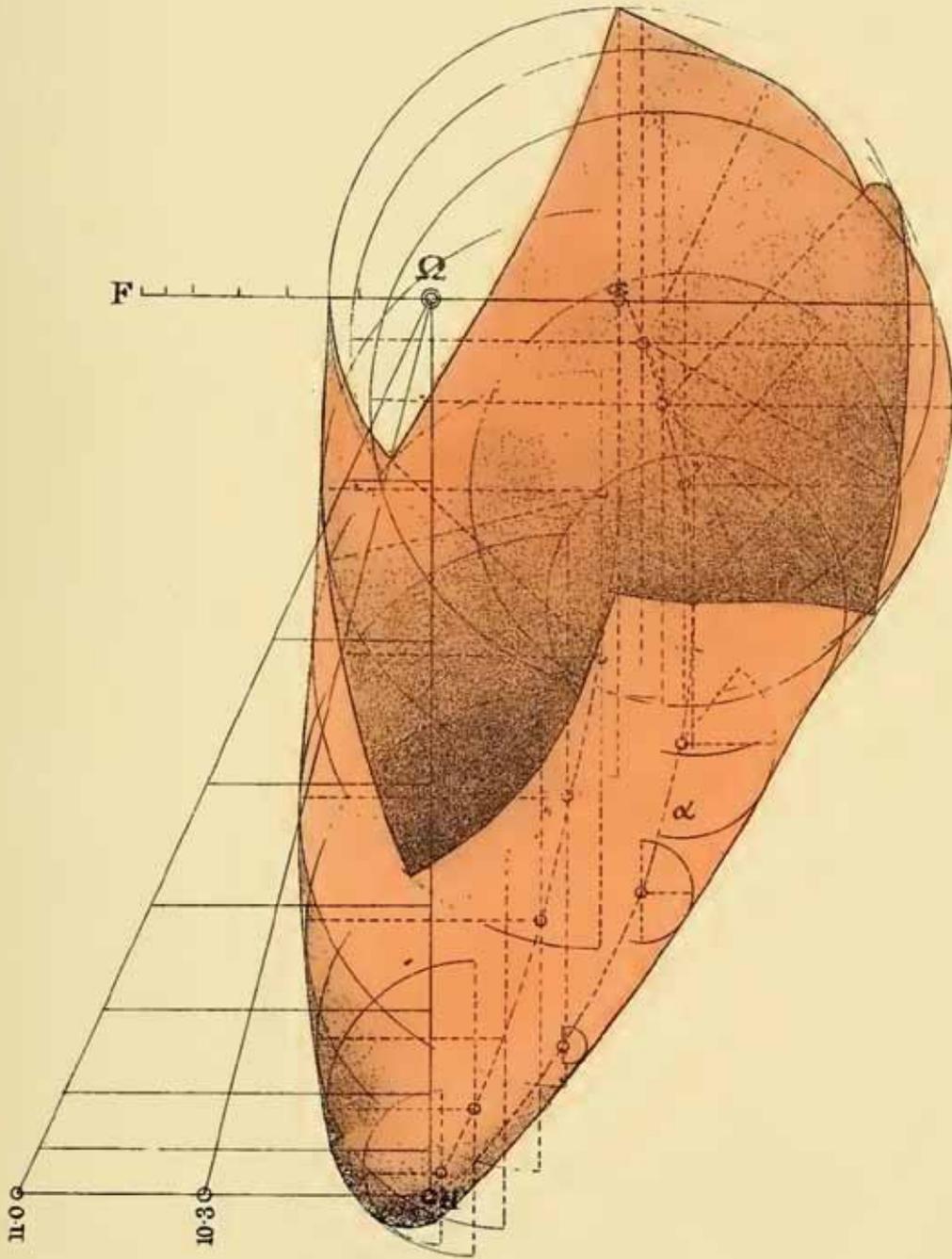


Fig. 15.

FIG.12

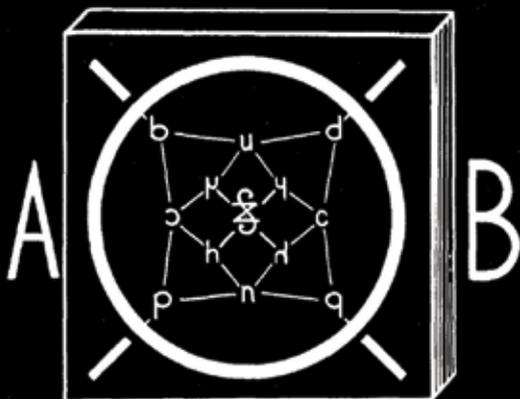


FIG. 14a

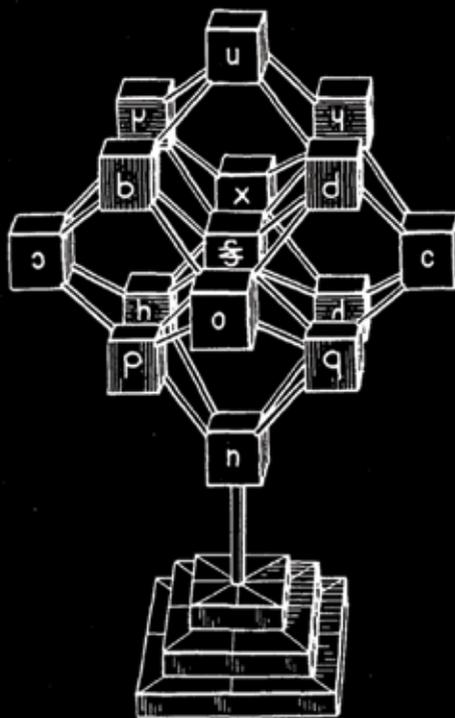


FIG.13

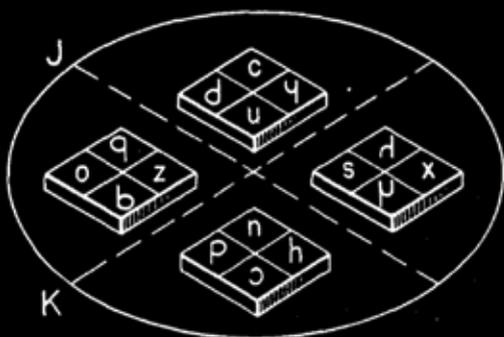
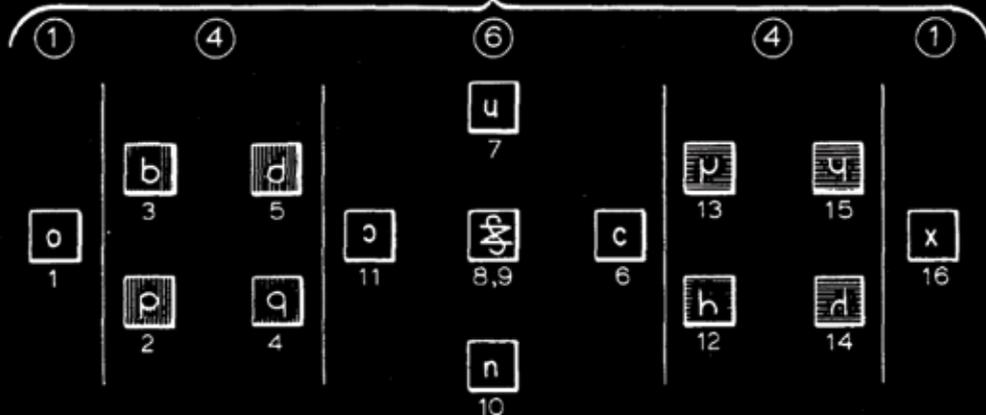


FIG 14b



the subject matter being discussed. The employment of visual forms to indicate rational or empirical sets of information has a dual function. In Betts case, we can observe and appreciate a historical document, and marvel at a nostalgic aesthetic of diagrams, which we are more used to seeing in the depiction of natural history rather than cognition. Such renderings of scientific information also perform as insights into a set of rules, principles and decisions made to persuade us of a system, which is unperceivable to the eye. With today's hunger for big data, the current trend of info-graphics continues to expand and create even more additions to the total noise of everyday informational life.

Whereas Benjamin Betts could be seen to have unwittingly become a fine artist of diagrams, American logician Shea Zellweger continues to blend a highly sophisticated system of mathematical rules into appealing and artistic set of 'infoobjects'. Zellweger has developed what is known as a logic alphabet, where a group of 'specially designed letter shapes can be manipulated like puzzles to reveal the geometrical patterns underpinning logic' (ii).

Without approaching the actual systems and mathematics behind these sculptural learning tools, and concentrating on the aesthetic translation of information into forms we can appreciate a body of work, which places Zellweger in the role of an unwitting outsider artist. Zellweger's hand crafted apparatus provide a toy like quality to extremely complex and abstract ideas, performing a reversal of

Benjamin Betts attempt to reveal the invisible cognitive forms of our minds Zellweger's 'toys' provide approachable and tactile experiences which involve us in an acceptance of a system of information that may be too hard to grasp fully, but begin to formally explain their use value, as visual representations of symmetry and geometry within a mode of thought.

We do not perhaps immediately understand what they are trying to tell us, (and most probably never will) but almost instantly they offer themselves as functioning items, visually useful yet wonderfully esoteric. Information displayed in this three dimensional format allows us to consider the world of logic in a wholly different way.

These theories, which represent some of the fundamental ingredients of rational life, express the foundations of computing and cornerstones of philosophy perform differently in a physical form. This is reflected through the reasoning that Zellweger gives for some of the choices behind him designing objects from his early theories on Logic.

"Up to the mid-70s my papers always came back with rejection slips. So when I started making the models I figured that a record of my diagrams in the patent office would be at least one place where my work would be anchored publicly. You can't patent ideas, such as logarithms, but you can get a patent on a slide rule, which is a material embodiment of them. My first patent was filed in October 1976, but not granted until June 1981" (iii)

This provides a tangent to the systems at play between scientific thought and designed systems, as the 'art object' outcomes of informational logic are formed via a legal loophole, a separate rule based system dealing with authorship and intellectual property. What resonates between these two examples of abstracted info-making, is the personal and private worlds that they represent. Both Betts and Zellweger provide portraits of big thinkers, imaginative and highly skilled, with the time and the ability to perfect and distill dense ideas into abstract visual forms.

These individual responses and endeavours to understand, create, explore and describe functions of reality offer ways to view esoteric, and abstract ideas, offer ways to consider our continued desires to objectify and concretise the invisible formulas that surround us. It is with this in mind that we can view 'The Enthusiast' as a portrait of a man who wishes to create his own deeply personal form of databased artwork and reflect on the way we choose to rely or depend on information becoming physical.

i. Louisa S. Cook
Geometrical psychology : or, The science of representation : an abstract of the theories and diagrams of B.W. Betts
 (London, G. Redway, 1897) pg 9

ii Christine Wertheim
Crystal Clear: an interview with Shea Zellweger
 Cabinet Magazine Vol 18 (N.Y USA, 2005) pg 19

iii Ibid

$$A^{\alpha} \frac{1.00}{\omega} L J^{\phi} \times \frac{5}{2}$$

$$A^s$$

Fig. II.

Ω α 1.00 K ϕ 4 χ 5
 ω 1.05 M
A⁵

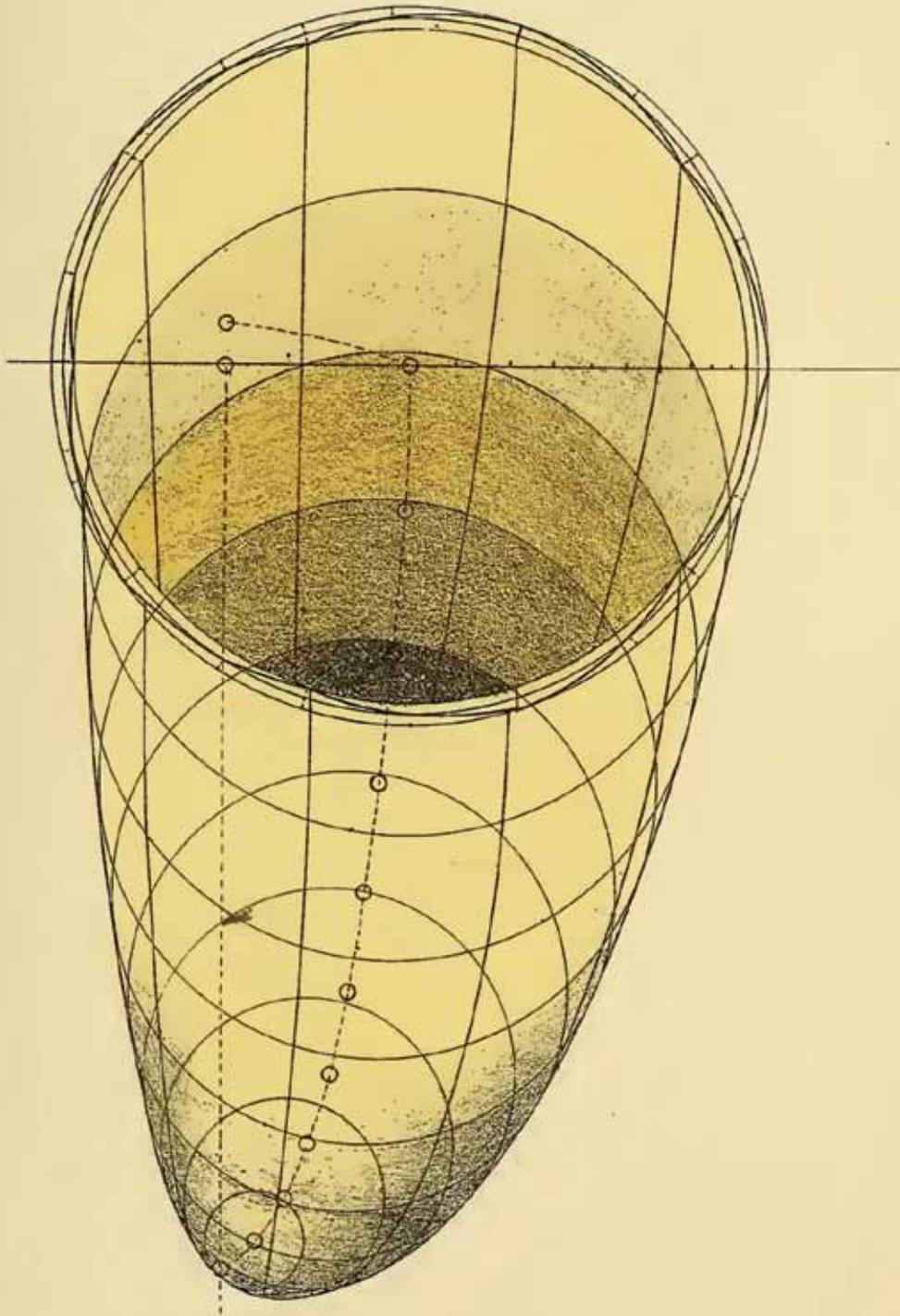
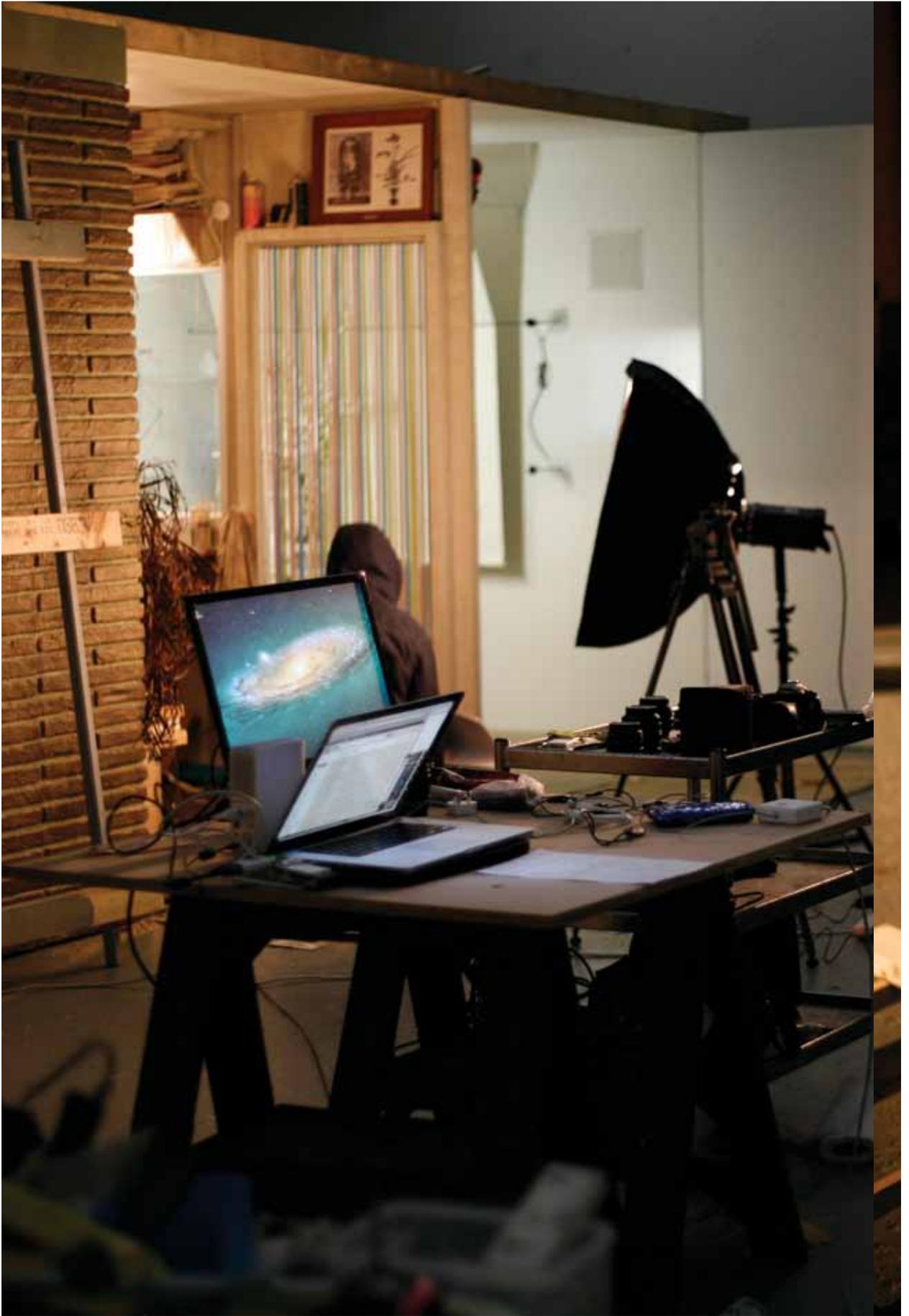
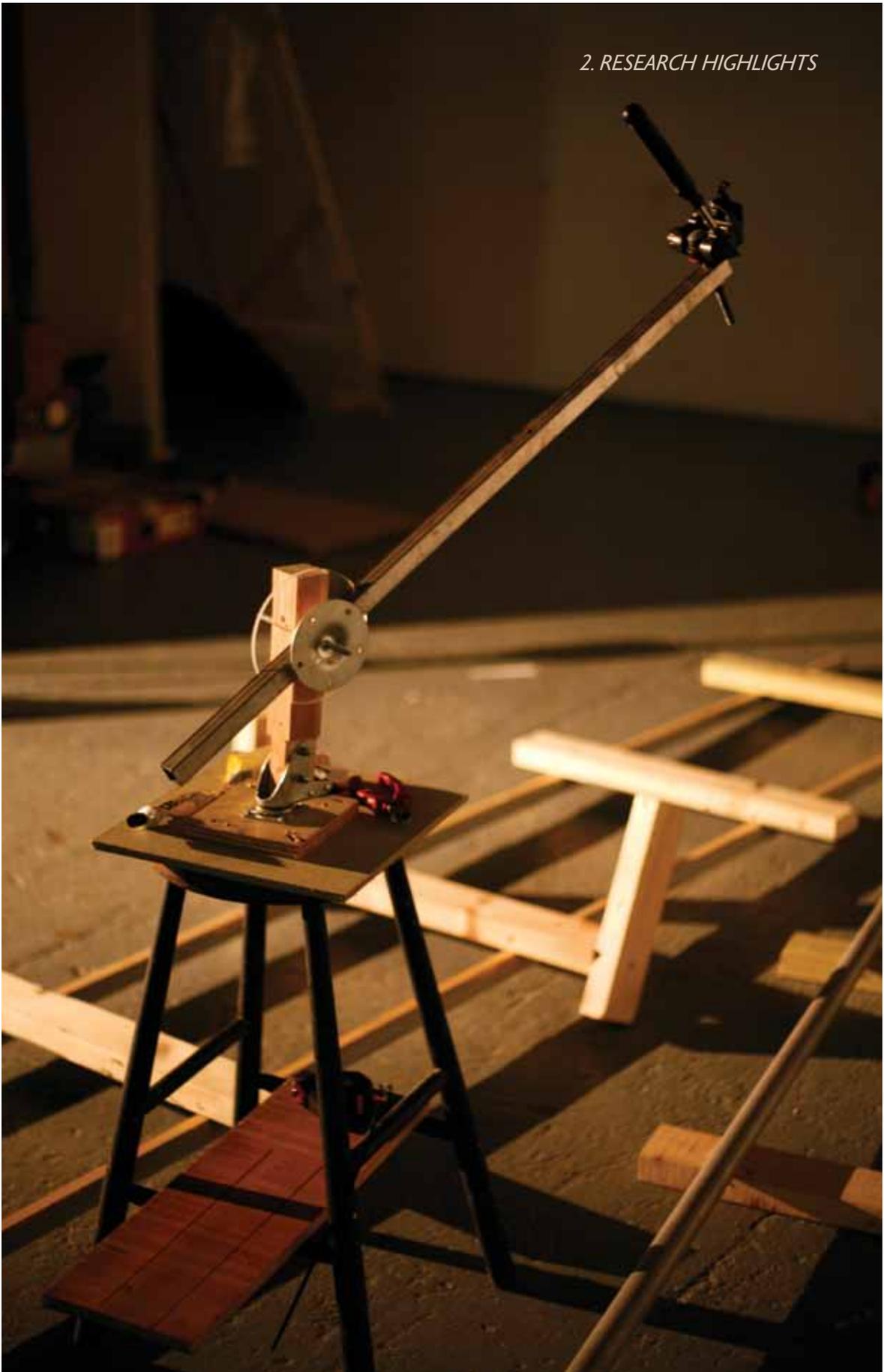


Fig. 10.



2. RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS





*Sogetsu Rikkwa depicting the four seasons
made by Sofu Teshigahara in London in October 1965*



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Neuromarketing: Tapping Into the 'Pleasure Center' of Consumers

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It's easy for businesses to keep track of what we buy, but harder to figure out why. Enter a nascent field called neuromarketing, which uses the tools of neuroscience to determine why we prefer some products over others. Harvard Business School marketing professor Uma R. Karmarkar explains how raw brain data is helping researchers unlock the mysteries of consumer choice in this article by Carmen Nobel, which first appeared on the [HBS Working Knowledge website](#).

In the early 1950s, two scientists at McGill University inadvertently discovered an area of the rodent brain dubbed "the pleasure center," located deep in the nucleus accumbens. When a group of lab rats had the opportunity to stimulate their own pleasure

centers via a lever-activated electrical current, they pressed the lever over and over again, hundreds of times per hour, forgoing food or sleep, until many of them dropped dead from exhaustion. Further research found pleasure centers exist in human brains, too.

Most humans are a little more complicated than rats, of course. But we are largely motivated by what makes us feel good, especially when it comes to our purchasing decisions. To that end, many major corporations have begun to take special interest in how understanding the human brain can help them better understand



(Photo credit: Wikipedia)

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

NICHOLAS MORTMER

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4. The Composition of Ikebana

n The beauty of an *Ikebana* consists in the beautiful composite
r- order intended to produce visual effects. It exists for beauty
1- of composition created by the use of the lines, surfaces and
colours of the plants.

rt The composition of *Ikebana* is the key to the value of the
it work. An accurate grasp of the very beautiful individualities
d of the plants is essential. And, in order that *Ikebana* may de-
s- velop as a vital art, the beauty of the composition should keep
it pace with that beauty which is sought by the culture and the
1- intellect of our new age. In order to attain beauty of compo-
:r sition it may be considered necessary to study nature closely
1, and thus come to understand the beauty of trees and flowers.
1- At the same time it is necessary to take steps to ensure good
n harmony in the things that form our environment, to have
1- a creative attitude even towards furniture and appliances,
ta to give attention to architecture and to arts and crafts. The
k beauty of an *Ikebana* composition does not imply beauty for
i- beauty's sake or the pursuit of it as an abstraction. We should
strive to create a beautiful world apart from nature, making
human life more joyous and richer.

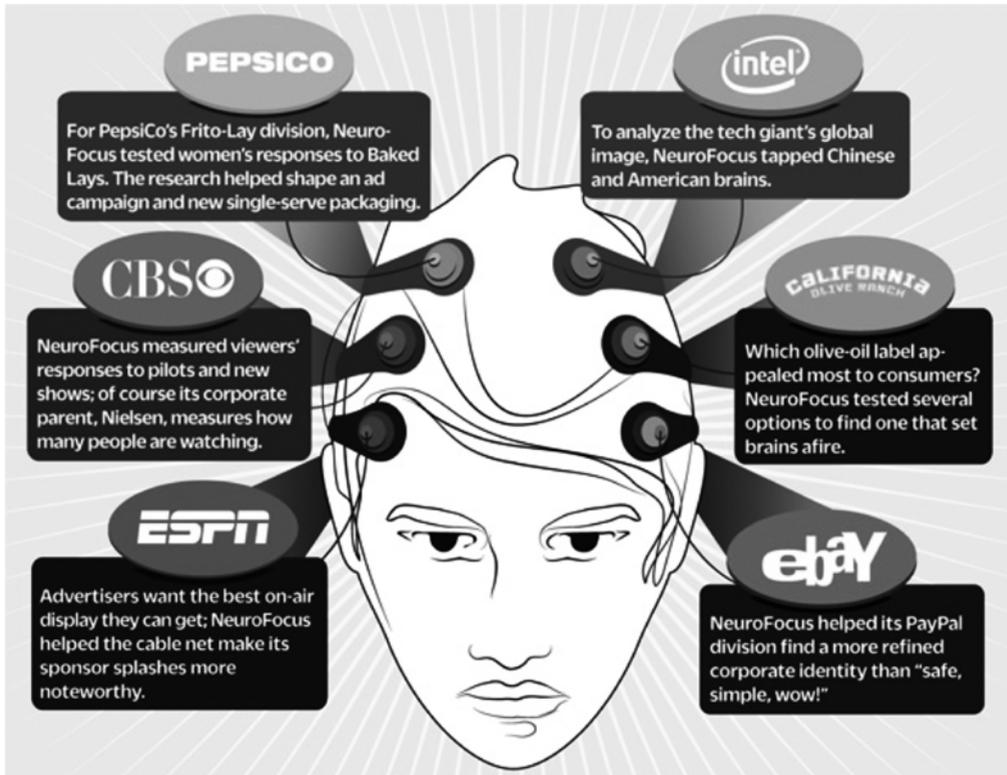


ILLUSTRATION BY SUPEREXPRESSO

"I bet you, long ago if you looked at cave paintings, there were a bunch of Cro-Magnon men and women sitting around a fire in focus groups wondering whether to go hunt mastodon that night," Pradeep says. "Today, our focus groups are no different." In the tale of our inner lives, we have always been unreliable narrators. Pradeep believes he can get at the truth.

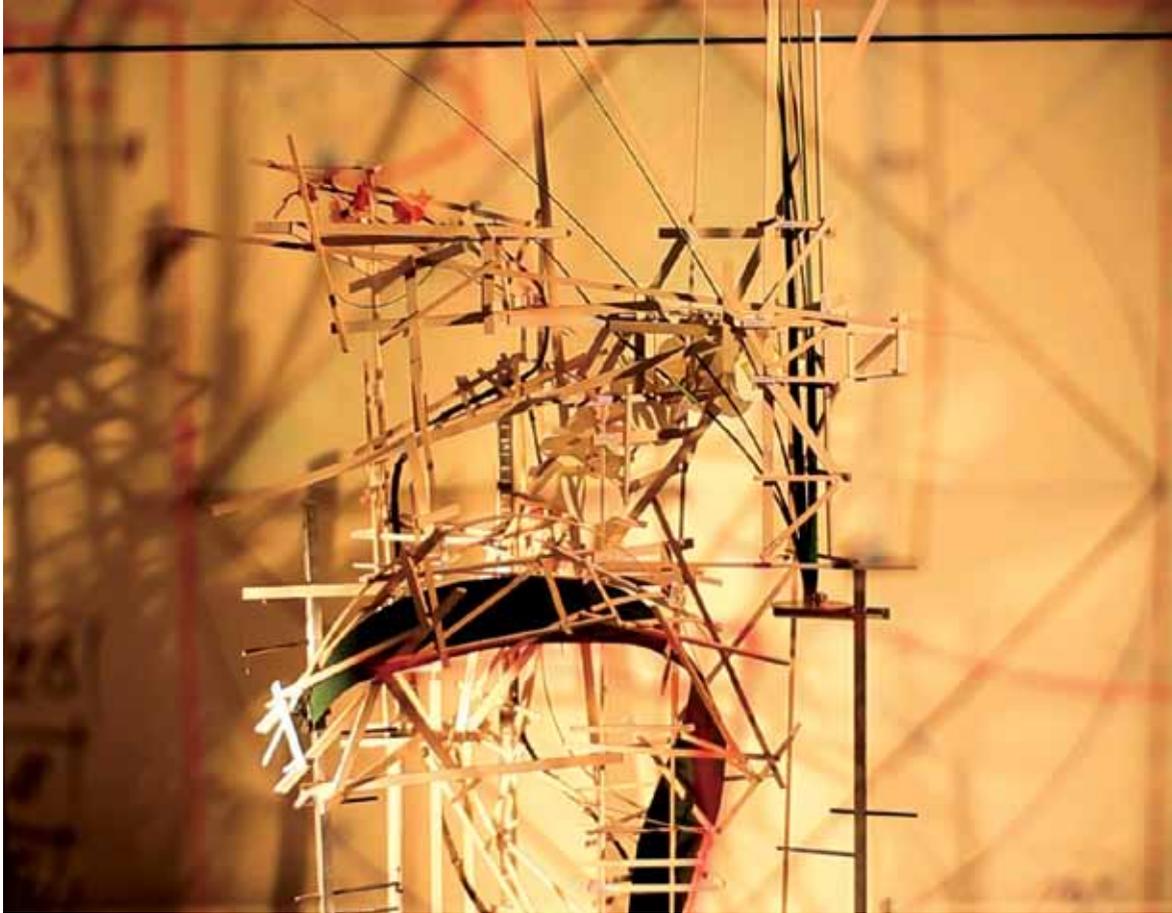
When David Ginsberg joined Intel in 2009 as the company's director of insights and market research, he was something of an expert on the slippery nature of "truth," having spent 15 years working on political campaigns for John Edwards, John Kerry, Al Gore, and Bill Clinton. Ginsberg was downright skeptical of neuromarketing, or, as he calls it, "nonconscious-based research." He thought it had more to do with science fiction than reality. But he also knew that Intel had been conducting market research as if it were still 1965, with surveys that were the equivalent of sending Gallup off to knock on thousands of doors. That may have worked decently in the days when a person bought a computer based on specs--processing speed, RAM, etc. But in an age where virtually every computer is sold with power to spare, Ginsberg knew that the rationale for buying a certain computer was as much emotional as it was rational. To compete in this new market, Intel the company had to understand how people felt about Intel the brand.

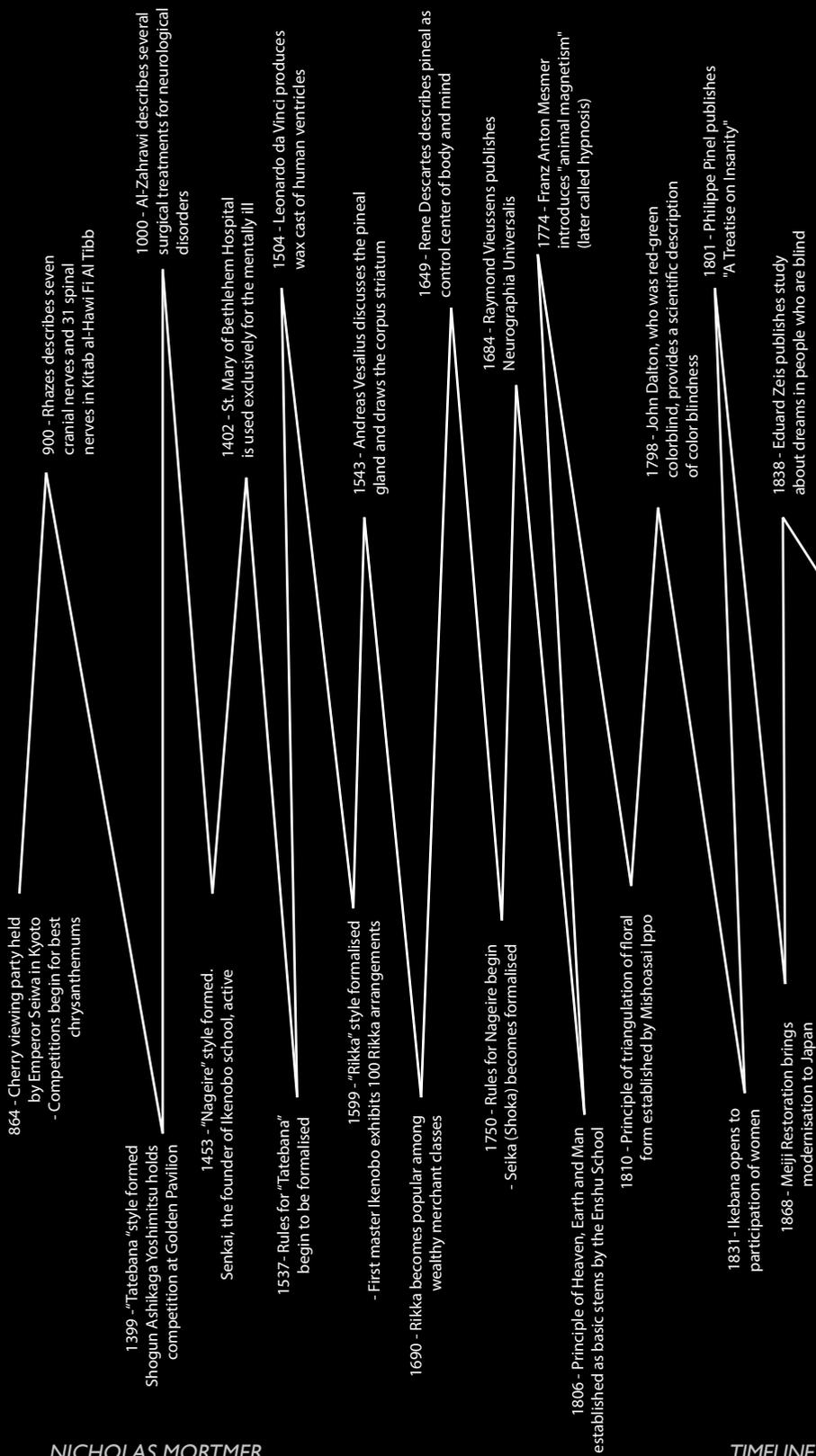
"If you ask people if they know Intel, something like 90% will say they know Intel," Ginsberg says. "Ask if they like Intel, a huge percentage will say they like Intel. Ask them [to rank or name] tech leaders, however, and we come out much lower on the list." Ginsberg felt that he needed to understand consumers' feelings at a deeper level: What words did consumers associate with Intel? Were these associations altered by one's culture? Ginsberg

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1769238/neurofocus-uses-neuromarketing-hack-your-brain>









- 1897 - Moribana school hold first exhibition
- 1899 - Josiah Conder writes first English Language book on Ikebana - "Floral Art of Japan"
- 1900 - Sigmund Freud publishes "The Interpretation of Dreams"
- 1905 - Santiago Ramón y Cajal published five science-fictional "Vacation Stories" under the pen name "Dr. Bacteria". 1906 he won the Nobel Prize for work on the structure of the nervous system
- 1912 - Original formula for the intelligence quotient (IQ) developed by William Stern
- 1922 - "Free Style" arrangement advocated
- 1927 - Teshigahara Sofu founds Sogetsu School
- 1937 - James W. Papez develops "visceral theory" of emotion
- 1947 - The American EEG Society was founded and the first International EEG congress was held.
- 1951 - Ikebana Exhibition in Radio City, New York
- 1964 - Ikebana International holds convention during New York Worlds Fair
- 1972 - Raymond Damadian files the first patent for an MRI machine
- 1978 - Teshigahara Hiroshi, son of Teshigahara Sofu directs final episodes of Shin Zatoichi
- 1980 - Ikebana popularised globally
- 1987 - Fluoxetine (Prozac) introduced as treatment for depression
- 1988 - Dale Chihuly exhibits Ikebana installation in Honolulu
- 1990 - Total Recall - Directed by Paul Verhoeven is released.
- 1990 - U.S. President George Bush declares the decade starting in 1990 the "Decade of the Brain"
- 1992 - Seikei Bijin (Artificial Beauty) Korean television drama focusing on Ikebana begins to air
- 1999 - Neurofocus - NeuroMarketing company founded
- 2002 - Researchers at the University of Florida Gainesville isolate 13 genes in flowers that result in the blossom's fragrance
- 2005 - Neurofocus - NeuroMarketing company founded
- 2007 - Mario Beauregard uses fMRI scans to pinpoint areas in the brain that are active whilst nuns recall the most powerful religious epiphany of their lives
- 2007 - Semir Zeki receives £1 million to establish a programme of research in the new field of 'neuroaesthetics'
- 2008 - Neurological factors used in criminal conviction of woman in India



4. SELECTED TEXT :
AGAINST NATURE
J K HUYSMANS



VIII

DES ESSEINTES had always been excessively fond of flowers, but this passion of his, which at Jutigny had originally embraced all flowers without distinction of species or genus, had finally become more discriminating, limiting itself to a single caste.

For a long time now he had despised the common, everyday varieties that blossom on the Paris market-stalls, in wet flower-pots, under green awnings or red umbrellas.

At the same time that his literary tastes and artistic preferences had become more refined, recognizing only such works as had been sifted and distilled by subtle and tormented minds, and at the same time that his distaste for accepted ideas had hardened into disgust, his love of flowers had rid itself of its residuum, its lees, had been clarified, so to speak, and purified.

It amused him to liken a horticulturist's shop to a microcosm in which every social category and class was represented - poor, vulgar slum-flowers, the gilliflower for instance, that are really at home only on the window-sill of a garret, with their roots squeezed into milk-cans or old earthenware pots; then pretentious, conventional, stupid flowers such as the rose, whose proper place is in pots concealed inside porcelain vases painted by nice young ladies; and lastly, flowers of charm and tremulous delicacy, exotic flowers exiled to Paris and kept warm in palaces of glass, princesses of the vegetable kingdom, living aloof and apart, having nothing whatever in common with the popular plants or the bourgeois blooms.

Now, he could not help feeling a certain interest, a certain pity for the lower-class flowers, wilting in the slums under the foul breath of sewers and sinks; on the other hand, he loathed those that go with the cream-and-gold drawing-rooms in new houses; he kept his admiration, in fact, for the rare and aristocratic plants from distant lands, kept alive with cunning

attention in artificial tropics created by carefully regulated stoves.

But this deliberate choice he had made of hothouse flowers had itself been modified under the influence of his general ideas, of the definite conclusions he had now arrived at on all matters. In former days, in Paris, his inborn taste for the artificial had led him to neglect the real flower for its copy, faithfully and almost miraculously executed in indiarubber and wire, calico and taffeta, paper and velvet.

As a result, he possessed a wonderful collection of tropical plants, fashioned by the hands of true artists, following Nature step by step, repeating her processes, taking the flower from its birth, leading it to maturity, imitating it even to its death, noting the most indefinable nuances, the most fleeting aspects of its awakening or its sleep, observing the pose of its petals, blown back by the wind or crumpled up by the rain, sprinkling its unfolding corolla with dewdrops of gum, and adapting its appearance to the time of year – in full bloom when branches are bent under the weight of sap, or with a shrivelled cupula and a withered stem when petals are dropping off and leaves are falling.

This admirable artistry had long enthralled him, but now he dreamt of collecting another kind of flora: tired of artificial flowers aping real ones, he wanted some natural flowers that would look like fakes.

He applied his mind to this problem, but did not have to search for long or go far afield, seeing that his house was in the very heart of the district which had attracted all the great flower-growers. He went straight off to visit the hothouses of Châtillon and the valley of Aunay, coming home tired out and cleaned out, wonder-struck at the floral follies he had seen, thinking of nothing but the varieties he had bought, haunted all the while by memories of bizarre and magnificent blooms.

Two days later the waggons arrived. List in hand, Des Esseintes called the roll, checking his purchases one by one.

First of all the gardeners unloaded from their carts a collection of Caladiums, whose swollen, hairy stems supported

huge heart-shaped leaves; though they kept a general air of kinship, no two of them were alike.

There were some remarkable specimens – some a pinkish colour like the *Virginale*, which seemed to have been cut out of oilskin or sticking-plaster; some all white like the *Albane*, which looked as if it had been fashioned out of the pleura of an ox or the diaphanous bladder of a pig. Others, especially the one called *Madame Mame*, seemed to be simulating zinc, parodying bits of punched metal coloured emperor green and spattered with drops of oil-paint, streaks of red lead and white. Here, there were plants like the *Bosphorus* giving the illusion of starched calico spotted with crimson and myrtle green; there, others such as the *Aurora Borealis* flaunted leaves the colour of raw meat, with dark-red ribs and purplish fibrils, puffy leaves that seemed to be sweating blood and wine.

Between them, the *Albane* and *Aurora Borealis* represented the two temperamental extremes, apoplexy and chlorosis, in this particular family of plants.

The gardeners brought in still more varieties, this time affecting the appearance of a factitious skin covered with a network of counterfeit veins. Most of them, as if ravaged by syphilis or leprosy, displayed livid patches of flesh mottled with roseola, damasked with darts; others had the bright pink colour of a scar that is healing or the brown tint of a scab that is forming; others seemed to have been puffed up by cauteries, blistered by burns; others again revealed hairy surfaces pitted with ulcers and embossed with chancres; and last of all there were some which appeared to be covered with dressings of various sorts, coated with black mercurial lard, plastered with green belladonna ointment, dusted over with the yellow flakes of iodoform powder.

Gathered together, these sickly blooms struck Des Esseintes as even more monstrous than when he had first come upon them, mixed up with others like hospital patients inside the glass walls of their conservatory wards.

'Sapristil' he exclaimed, in an access of enthusiasm.

Another plant, of a type similar to the *Caladiums*, the *Alocasia Metallica*, roused him to still greater admiration.

Covered with a coat of greenish bronze shot with glints of silver, it was the supreme masterpiece of artifice; anyone would have taken it for a bit of stove-pipe cut into a pike-head pattern by the makers.

Next the men unloaded several bunches of lozenge-shaped leaves, bottle-green in colour; from the midst of each bunch rose a stiff stem on top of which trembled a great ace of hearts, as glossy as a pepper; and then, as if in defiance of all the familiar aspects of plant life, there sprang from the middle of this bright vermilion heart a fleshy, downy tail, all white and yellow, straight in some cases, corkscrewing above the heart like a pig's tail in others.

This was the *Anthurium*, an aroid recently imported from Colombia; it belonged to a section of the same family as a certain *Amorphophallus*, a plant from Cochin-China with leaves the shape of fish-slices and long black stalks crisscrossed with scars like the limbs of a negro slave.

Des Esseintes could scarcely contain himself for joy.

Now they were getting a fresh batch of monstrosities down from the carts – the *Echinopsis*, thrusting its ghastly pink blossoms out of cotton-wool compresses, like the stumps of amputated limbs; the *Nidularium*, opening its sword-shaped petals to reveal gaping flesh-wounds; the *Tillandsia Lindeni*, trailing its jagged plough-shares the colour of wine-must; and the *Cypripedium*, with its complex, incoherent contours devised by some demented draughtsman. It looked rather like a clog or a tidy, and on top was a human tongue bent back with the string stretched tight, just as you may see it depicted in the plates of medical works dealing with diseases of the throat and mouth; two little wings, of a jujube red, which might almost have been borrowed from a child's toy windmill, completed this baroque combination of the underside of a tongue, the colour of wine lees and slate, and a glossy pocket-case with a lining that oozed drops of viscous paste.

He could not take his eyes off this unlikely-looking orchid from India, and the gardeners, irritated by all these delays, began reading out themselves the labels stuck in the pots they were bringing in.

Des Esseintes watched them open-mouthed, listening in amazement to the forbidding names of the various herbaceous plants – the *Encephalartos horridus*, a gigantic artichoke, an iron spike painted a rust colour, like the ones they put on park gates to keep trespassers from climbing over; the *Cocos Micania*, a sort of palm-tree, with a slim, indented stem, surrounded on all sides with tall leaves like paddles and oars; the *Zamia Lehmanni*, a huge pineapple, a monumental Cheshire cheese stuck in heath-mould and bristling on top with barbed javelins and native arrows; and the *Cibotium Spectabile*, challenging comparison with the weirdest nightmare and out-doing even its congeners in the craziness of its formation, with an enormous orang-outang's tail poking out of a cluster of palm-leaves – a brown, hairy tail twisted at the tip into the shape of a bishop's crozier.

But he did not linger over these plants, as he was waiting impatiently for the series which particularly fascinated him, those vegetable ghouls the carnivorous plants – the downy-rimmed Fly-trap of the Antilles, with its digestive secretions and its curved spikes that interlock to form a grille over any insect it imprisons; the Drosera of the peat-bogs, flaunting a set of glandulous hairs; the Sarracena and the Cephalothus, opening voracious gullets capable of consuming and digesting whole chunks of meat; and finally the Nepenthes, which in shape and form passes all the bounds of eccentricity.

With unwearied delight he turned in his hands the pot in which this floral extravaganza was quivering. It resembled the gum-tree in its long leaves of a dark, metallic green; but from the end of each leaf there hung a green string, an umbilical cord carrying a greenish-coloured pitcher dappled with purple markings, a sort of German pipe in porcelain, a peculiar kind of bird's nest that swayed gently to and fro, displaying an interior carpeted with hairs.

'That really is a beauty,' murmured Des Esseintes.

But he had to cut short his display of pleasure, for now the gardeners, in a hurry to get away, were rapidly unloading the last of their plants, jumbling up tuberous Begonias and black Crotons flecked with spots of red lead like old iron.

Then he noticed that there was still one name left on his list, the *Cattleya* of New Granada. They pointed out to him a little winged bell-flower of a pale lilac, an almost imperceptible mauve; he went up, put his nose to it, and started back – for it gave out a smell of varnished deal, a toy-box smell that brought back horrid memories of New Year's Day when he was a child. He decided he had better be wary of it, and almost regretted having admitted among all the scentless plants he possessed this orchid with its unpleasantly reminiscent odour.

Once he was alone again, he surveyed the great tide of vegetation that had flooded into his entrance-hall, the various species all intermingling, crossing swords, creeses, or spears with one another, forming a mass of green weapons, over which floated, like barbarian battle-flags, flowers of crude and dazzling colours.

The air in the room was getting purer, and soon, in a dark corner, down by the floor, a soft white light appeared. He went up to it and discovered that it came from a clump of *Rhizomorphs* which, as they breathed, shone like tiny night-lights.

'These plants are really astounding,' he said to himself, stepping back to appraise the entire collection. Yes, his object had been achieved: not one of them looked real; it was as if cloth, paper, porcelain, and metal had been lent by man to Nature to enable her to create these monstrosities. Where she had not found it possible to imitate the work of human hands, she had been reduced to copying the membranes of animals' organs, to borrowing the vivid tints of their rotting flesh, the hideous splendours of their gangrened skin.

'It all comes down to syphilis in the end,' *Des Esseintes* reflected, as his gaze was drawn and held by the horrible markings of the *Caladiums*, over which a shaft of daylight was playing. And he had a sudden vision of the unceasing torments inflicted on humanity by the virus of distant ages. Ever since the beginning of the world, from generation to generation, all living creatures had handed down the inexhaustible heritage, the everlasting disease that ravaged the ancestors of

man and even ate into the bones of the old fossils that were being dug up at the present time.

Without ever abating, it had travelled down the ages, still raging to this day in the form of surreptitious pains, in the disguise of headaches or bronchitis, hysteria or gout. From time to time it came to the surface, generally singling out for attack ill-to-do, ill-fed people, breaking out in spots like pieces of gold, ironically crowning the poor devils with an almeh's diadem of sequins, adding insult to injury by stamping their skin with the very symbol of wealth and well-being.

And now here it was again, reappearing in all its pristine splendour on the brightly coloured leaves of these plants!

'It is true,' continued Des Esseintes, going back to the starting point of his argument, 'it is true that most of the time Nature is incapable of producing such depraved, unhealthy species alone and unaided; she supplies the raw materials, the seed and the soil, the nourishing womb and the elements of the plant, which man rears, shapes, paints, and carves afterwards to suit his fancy.

'Stubborn, muddle-headed, and narrow-minded though she is, she has at last submitted, and her master has succeeded in changing the soil components by means of chemical reactions, in utilizing slowly matured combinations, carefully elaborated crossings, in employing cuttings and graftings skilfully and methodically, so that now he can make her put forth blossoms of different colours on the same branch, invents new hues for her, and modifies at will the age-old shapes of her plants. In short, he rough-hews her blocks of stone, finishes off her sketches, signs them with his stamp, impresses on them his artistic hall-mark.

'There's no denying it,' he concluded; 'in the course of a few years man can operate a selection which easy-going Nature could not conceivably make in less than a few centuries; without the shadow of a doubt, the horticulturists are the only true artists left to us nowadays.'

He was a little tired and felt stifled in this hothouse atmosphere; all the outings he had had in the last few days had exhausted him; the transition between the immobility of a

sequestered life and the activity of an outdoor existence had been too sudden. He left the hall and went to lie down on his bed; but, engrossed in a single subject, as if wound up by a spring, his mind went on paying out its chain even in sleep, and he soon fell victim to the sombre fantasies of a nightmare.

He was walking along the middle of a path through a forest at dusk, beside a woman he had never met, never even seen before. She was tall and thin, with tow-like hair, a bulldog face, freckled cheeks, irregular teeth projecting under a snub nose; she was wearing a maid's white apron, a long scarlet kerchief draped across her breast, a Prussian soldier's half-boots, a black bonnet trimmed with ruches and a cabbage-bow.

She looked rather like a booth-keeper at a fair, or a member of some travelling circus.

He asked himself who this woman was whom he felt to have been deeply and intimately associated with his life for a long time, and he tried to remember her origins, her name, her occupation, her significance – but all in vain, for no recollection came to him of this inexplicable yet undeniable liaison.

He was still searching his memory when suddenly a strange figure appeared before them on horseback, went ahead for a minute at a gentle trot, then turned round in the saddle.

His blood froze and he stood rooted to the spot in utter horror. The rider was an equivocal, sexless creature with a green skin and terrifying eyes of a cold, clear blue shining out from under purple lids; there were pustules all round its mouth; two amazingly thin arms, like the arms of a skeleton, bare to the elbows and shaking with fever, projected from its ragged sleeves, and its fleshless thighs twitched and shuddered in jack-boots that were far too wide for them.

Its awful gaze was fixed on Des Esseintes, piercing him, freezing him to the marrow, while the bulldog woman, even more terrified than he was, clung to him and howled blue murder, her head thrown back and her neck rigid.

At once he understood the meaning of the dreadful vision. He had before his eyes the image of the Pox.

Utterly panic-stricken, beside himself with fear, he dashed down a side path and ran for dear life until he got to a

summer-house standing on the left among some laburnums. Safely inside, he dropped into a chair in the passage.

A few moments later, just as he was beginning to get his breath back, the sound of sobbing made him look up. The bulldog woman stood before him, a grotesque and pitiful sight. She was weeping bitterly, complaining that she had lost her teeth in her flight, and, taking a number of clay pipes out of her apron pocket, she proceeded to smash them up and stuff bits of the white stems into the holes in her gums.

'But she's mad!' Des Esseintes said to himself; 'those bits of stem will never hold' – and, true enough, they all came dropping out of her jaws, one after the other.

At that moment a galloping horse was heard approaching. Terror seized Des Esseintes and his legs went limp under him. But as the sound of hoofs came nearer, despair stung him to action like the crack of a whip; he flung himself upon the woman, who was now stamping on the pipe bowls, begging her to be quiet and not to betray them both by the noise of her boots. She struggled furiously, and he had to drag her to the end of the passage, throttling her to stop her crying out. Then, all of a sudden, he noticed a tap-room door with green-painted shutters and saw that it was unlatched; he pushed it open, dashed through – and stopped dead.

In front of him, in the middle of a vast clearing, enormous white pierrots were jumping about like rabbits in the moonlight.

Tears of disappointment welled up in his eyes; he would never, no, never be able to cross the threshold of that door.

'I'd be trampled to death if I tried,' he told himself – and as if to confirm his fears, the number of giant pierrots kept increasing; their bounds now filled the whole horizon and the whole sky, so that they bumped alternately against heaven and earth with their heads and their heels.

Just then the sound of the horse's hoofs stopped. It was there in the passage, behind a little round window; more dead than alive, Des Esseintes turned round and saw through the circular opening two pricked ears, a set of yellow teeth, a

pair of nostrils breathing twin jets of vapour that stank of phenol.

He sank to the ground, giving up all thought of resistance or flight; and he shut his eyes so as not to meet the dreadful gaze of the Pox, glaring at him from behind the wall, though even so he felt it forcing its way under his closed eyelids, gliding down his clammy back, and travelling over the whole of his body, the hairs of which stood on end in pools of cold sweat. He was prepared for almost anything to happen and even hoped for the *coup de grâce* to make an end of it all. What seemed like a century, and was probably a minute, went by; then he opened his eyes again with a shudder of apprehension.

Everything had vanished without warning; and like some transformation scene, some theatrical illusion, a hideous mineral landscape now lay before him, a wan, gullied landscape stretching away into the distance without a sign of life or movement. This desolate scene was bathed in light: a calm, white light, reminiscent of the glow of phosphorus dissolved in oil.

Suddenly, down on the ground, something stirred – something which took the form of an ashen-faced woman, naked but for a pair of green silk stockings.

He gazed at her inquisitively. Like horsehair crimped by over-hot irons, her hair was frizzy, with broken ends; two Nepenthes pitchers hung from her ears; tints of boiled veal showed in her half-opened nostrils. Her eyes gleaming ecstatically, she called to him in a low voice.

He had no time to answer, for already the woman was changing; glowing colours lit up her eyes; her lips took on the fierce red of the Anthuriums; the nipples of her bosom shone as brightly as two red peppers.

A sudden intuition came to him, and he told himself that this must be the Flower. His reasoning mania persisted even in this nightmare; and as in the daytime, it switched from vegetation to the Virus.

He now noticed the frightening irritation of the mouth and breasts, discovered on the skin of the body spots of bistre and copper, and recoiled in horror; but the woman's eyes fascinated

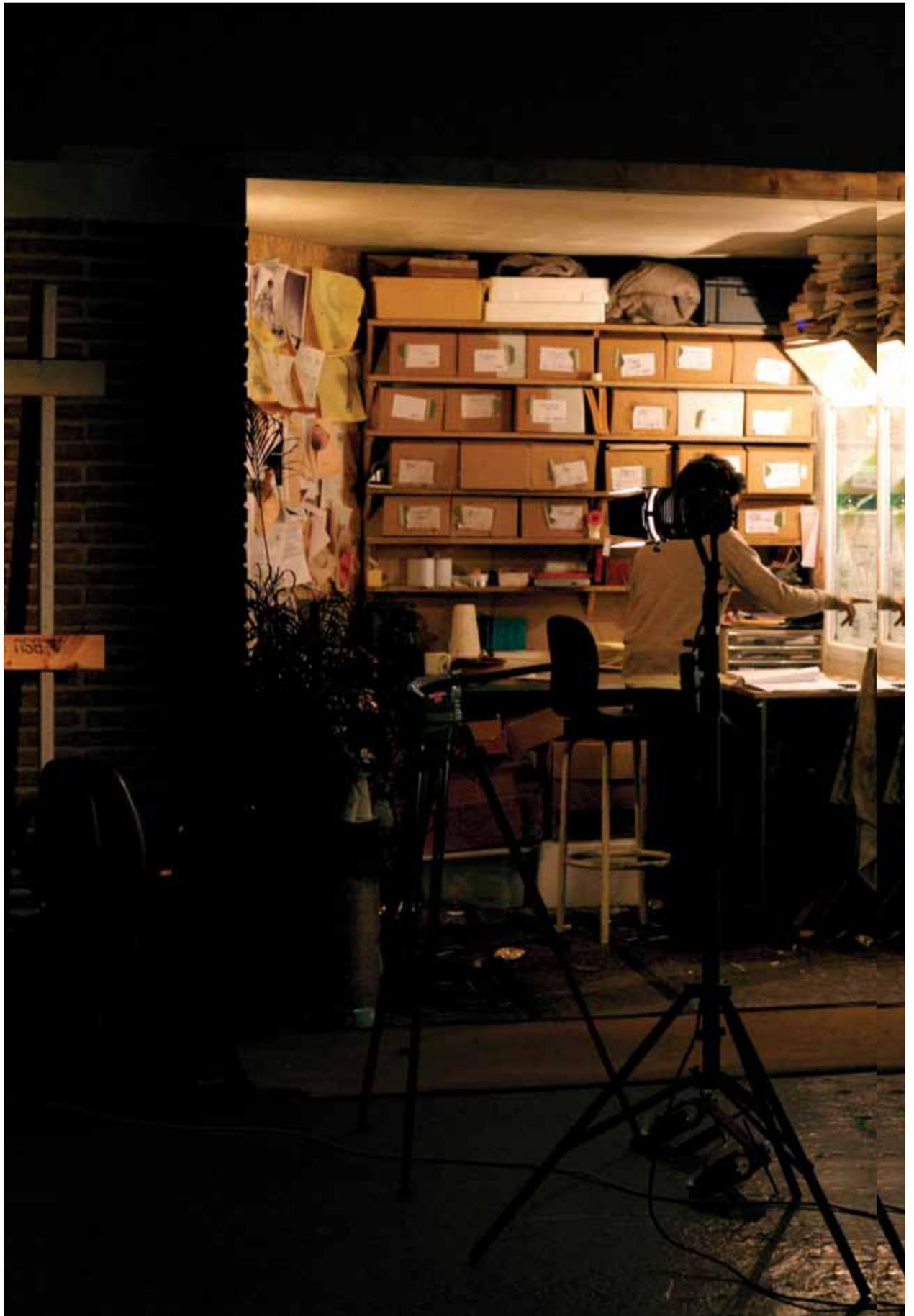
him, and he went slowly towards her, trying to dig his heels into the ground to hold himself back, and falling over deliberately, only to pick himself up again and go on. He was almost touching her when black Amorphophalli sprang up on every side and stabbed at her belly, which was rising and falling like a sea. He thrust them aside and pushed them back, utterly nauseated by the sight of these hot, firm stems twisting and turning between his fingers. Then, all of a sudden, the odious plants had disappeared and two arms were trying to enfold him. An agony of fear set his heart pounding madly, for the eyes, the woman's awful eyes, had turned a clear, cold blue, quite terrible to see. He made a superhuman effort to free himself from her embrace, but with an irresistible movement she clutched him and held him, and pale with horror, he saw the savage Nidularium blossoming between her uplifted thighs, with its swordblades gaping open to expose the bloody depths.

His body almost touching the hideous flesh-wound of this plant, he felt life ebbing away from him – and awoke with a start, choking, frozen, crazy with fear.

'Thank God,' he sobbed, 'it was only a dream.'

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*5. INVESTIGATION :
RATIONALISING THE
SUBJECTIVE - BEAUTY IN
THE EYE OF THE DESIGNER*



RATIONALISING THE SUBJECTIVE - BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF THE DESIGNER

"I find no basic conflict between those who appreciate the fine arts and those who respond to classic examples of the applied arts. They are stirred by the same impulse, a desire for beauty"

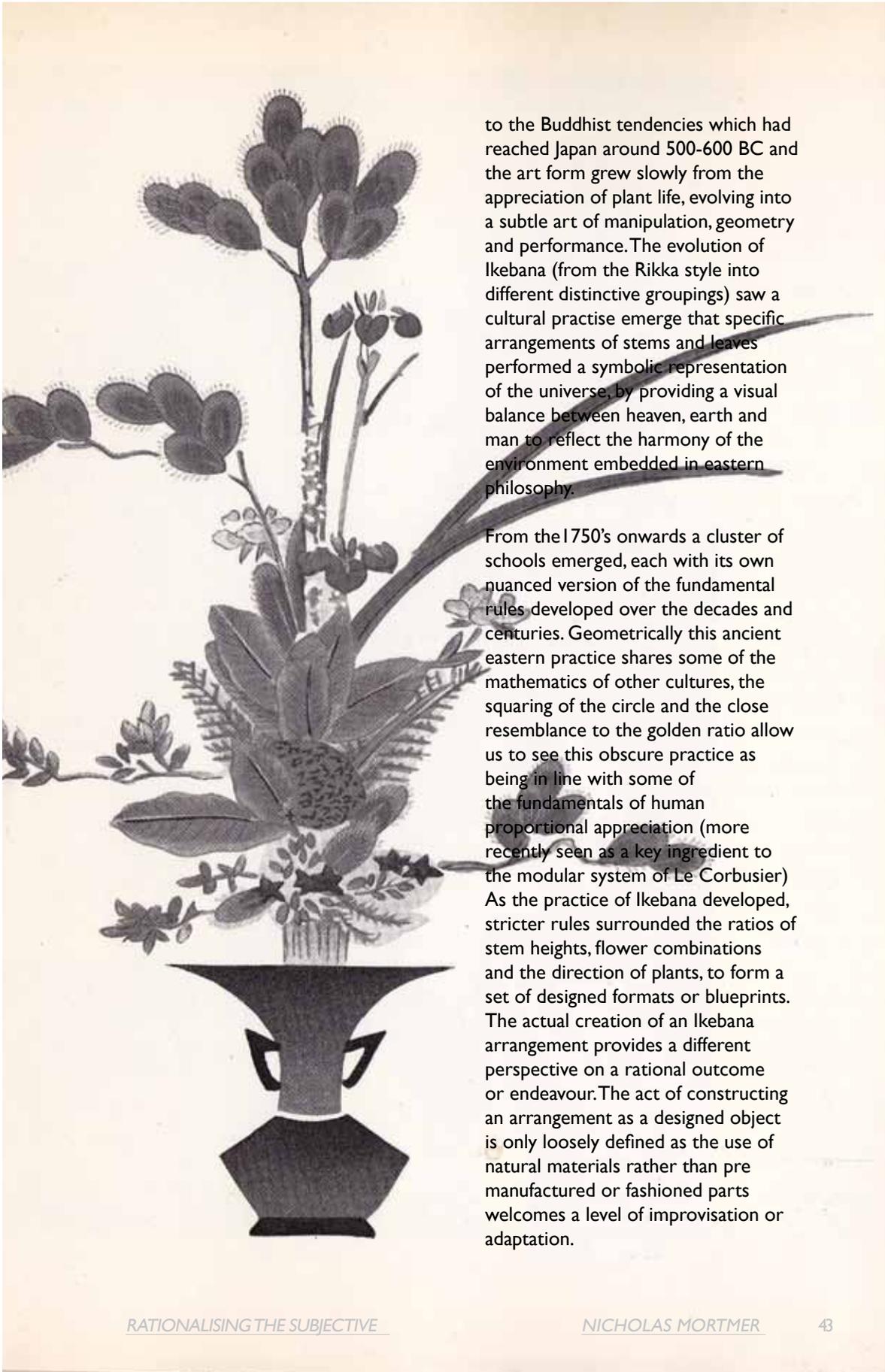
Henry Dreyfus – *Designing for People* - 1955

The project that this catalogue accompanies is rooted in reactions to the current speculations found within neuroscience, surrounding creative or emotional insight. We see today an increasing amount of news coverage and interest in the unraveling of the mind, exploring the foundations for consciousness and perception, which can be viewed as the latest technological update define universal truths. In the realm of aesthetic pleasure, visual beauty has been a device used to support systems of control, from religious ideologies to consumer culture. Understanding the reasons behind visual details that alter or control our perceptions has been a powerful skill to possess and functions as a way to shape an experience of reality. In two seemingly unrelated areas of design, a pursuit to create aesthetic experiences governed by specific rules can be seen to aim for the quantification of visual beauty as an alluring goal, which can discuss past present and future ambitions to control perceptual experiences. We can look to an ancient artistic practice, and emerging ideas in neuroscience to probe at systems designed to hunt for the truth behind our experience of a beautiful reality.

A prescribed sense of beauty is a timeless factor of life. Having an 'aesthetic' quality has provided the animal kingdom with specific significance which governs behavior and forms part of the secret formulas

for consciousness itself. Within the context of mankind's history, visual representations which provide a perceived pleasure have resulted in a rich and complex system of designed entities, religious, political, natural and manmade; what seems to be either easy on the eye, entralling to the senses, or simply 'beautiful' continues to feed into our current contemporary total noise of visual information.

The ability to construct visually affective forms has had its roots with an artistic skillset, a valuable power to imagine and create an emotive visual language. These practices have benefitted from technological advancements of the day, updating and expanding modes of representation. Today we see live in a world where the tools of creative output have been offered to any 'user' who chooses to participate, as the heritage of the photograph has led to world of possibility for anyone to master. As we become swamped with a surface layer of photographic filters, easy to use editing, and ubiquitous self publishing, we can consider some earlier functions of aesthetic creation or systems which are emerging and can be seen to suggest the hidden structures of our designed world. Dating back for over a thousand years, Ikebana has been the practice of the study and appreciation of an aesthetic design. Ikebana is the art of flower arranging - one of many cultural traditions found in the history, and present culture of Japan, and one which is often overshadowed by the prominent cultural heritage of the Japanese tea ceremony. Ikebana developed from an inherent appreciation of nature, fundamental



to the Buddhist tendencies which had reached Japan around 500-600 BC and the art form grew slowly from the appreciation of plant life, evolving into a subtle art of manipulation, geometry and performance. The evolution of Ikebana (from the Rikka style into different distinctive groupings) saw a cultural practise emerge that specific arrangements of stems and leaves performed a symbolic representation of the universe, by providing a visual balance between heaven, earth and man to reflect the harmony of the environment embedded in eastern philosophy.

From the 1750's onwards a cluster of schools emerged, each with its own nuanced version of the fundamental rules developed over the decades and centuries. Geometrically this ancient eastern practice shares some of the mathematics of other cultures, the squaring of the circle and the close resemblance to the golden ratio allow us to see this obscure practice as being in line with some of the fundamentals of human proportional appreciation (more recently seen as a key ingredient to the modular system of Le Corbusier) As the practice of Ikebana developed, stricter rules surrounded the ratios of stem heights, flower combinations and the direction of plants, to form a set of designed formats or blueprints. The actual creation of an Ikebana arrangement provides a different perspective on a rational outcome or endeavour. The act of constructing an arrangement as a designed object is only loosely defined as the use of natural materials rather than pre manufactured or fashioned parts welcomes a level of improvisation or adaptation.

A level of contingency and flux is very much a part of a creative act, and become ingredients for the meditative and reflective aspects of ikebana as both performance and meditation.

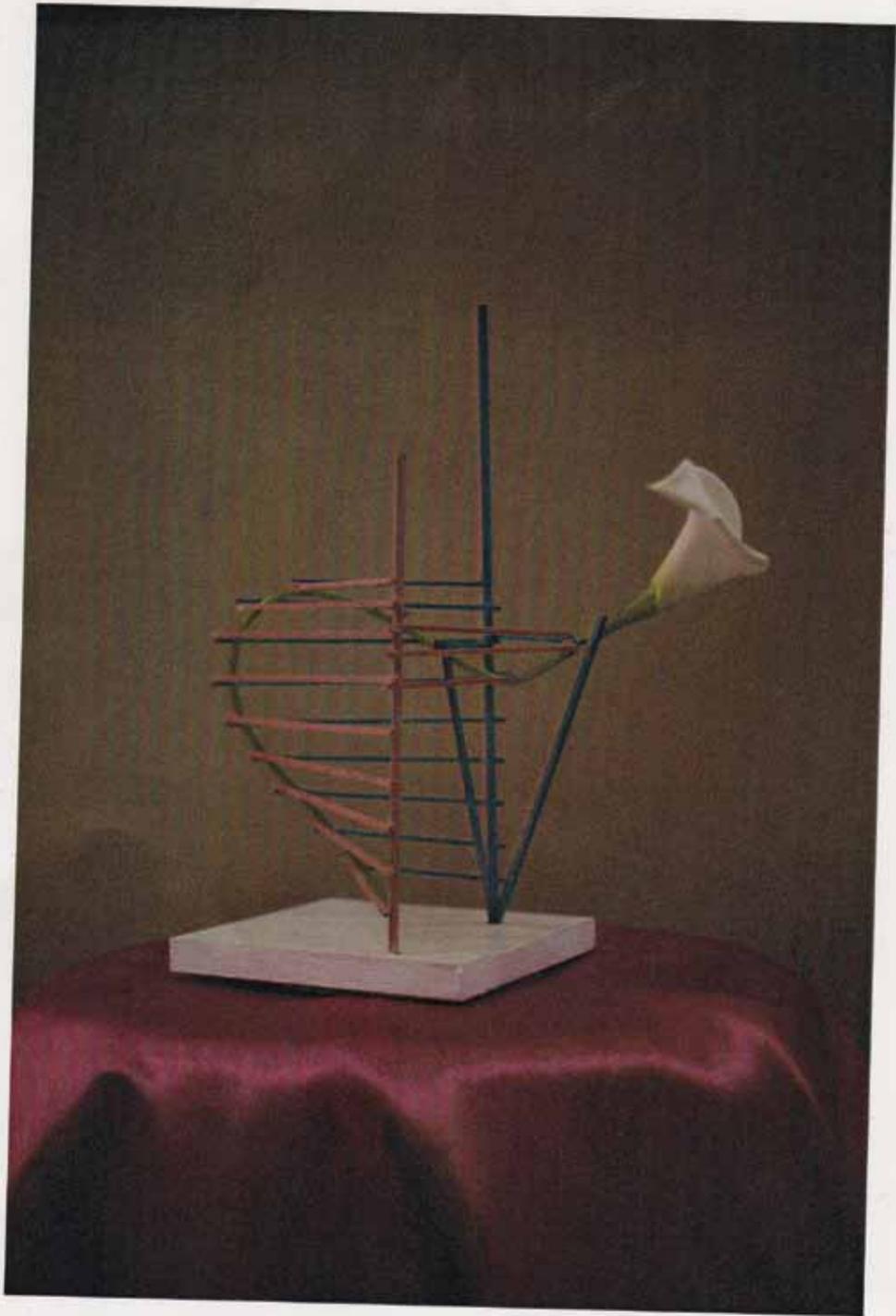
Therefore a physical act of aesthetic achievement is deemed beneficial, and it is worth noting that reports of Samurai using Ikebana to prepare for battle are not too dissimilar to reports of police in São Paulo in 2007. Certainly, Ikebana contains a variety of aspects, offering a way to combine a rule based - aesthetic system and an improvisational performance, which seeks to unify man nature to produce a beautiful outcome.

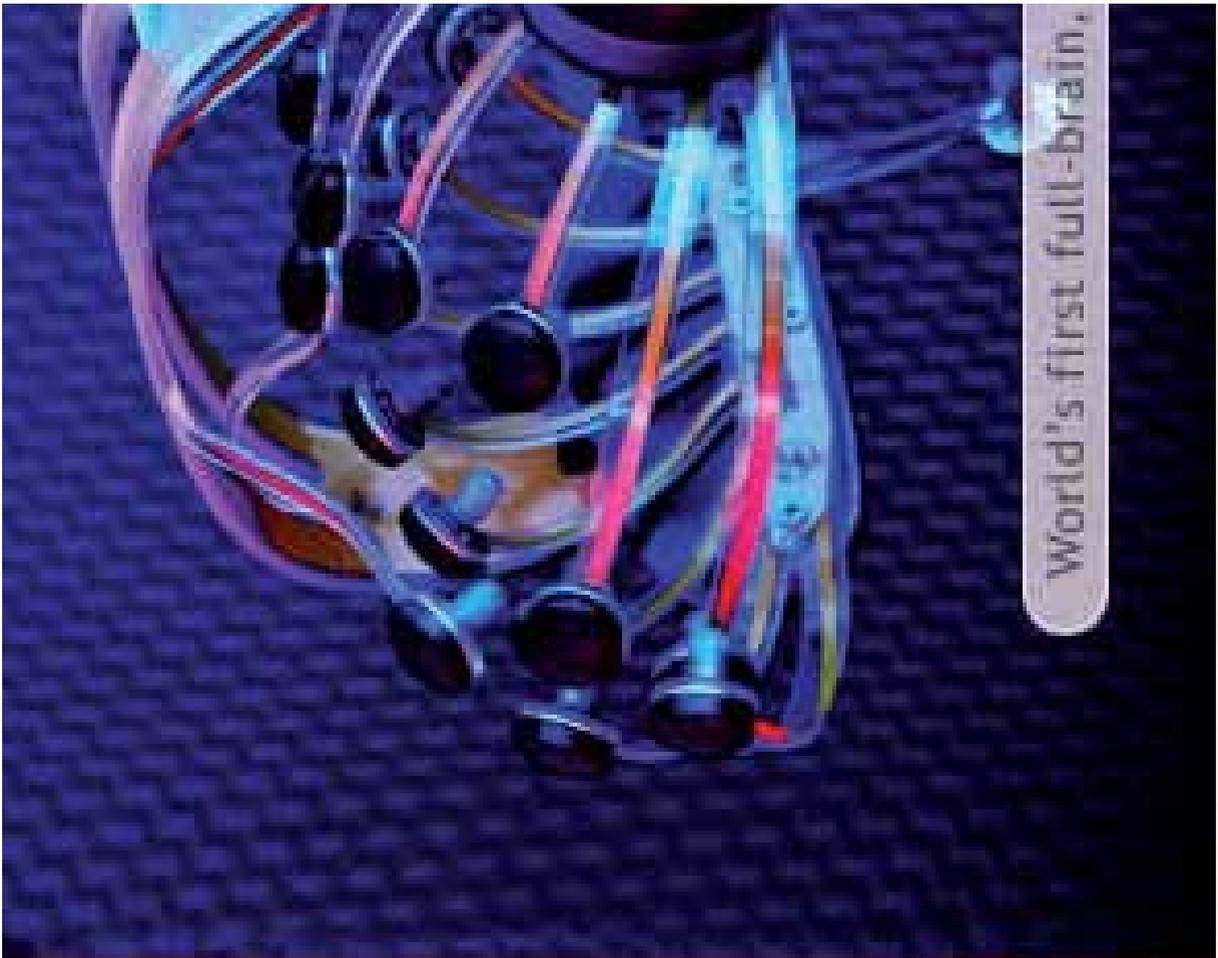
In todays technologically driven and contemporary global culture we can observe a very different form of interpreting the hidden forces which we are sure exist, beyond a spiritual or mythological heritage we can view a new frontier of explanation, definition and excitement. In the past decade, new areas of research and implementation have emerged in the world of neuroscience, which could be seen to tap into similar values as those found in Ikebana. Although no apparent connections are instantly visible it is important to view the larger system of neuroscience as a practice which is motivated by a desire for self actualization - to activate all the capacities of the mind and body. I would argue that ikebana was in its early evolution was an early form of such desire, by oscillating between a variety of values and actions to help visualize an inner balance or goal. By looking to the inner workings of the brain it seems that we are continuing to define forms of aesthetic appreciation, yet unlike Ikebana the pursuit for the truths

behind our appreciation is not imbued with a sense chance - instead with a continued need for definition, scientific research into our perceptions believes that we can rationalise even the most subjective aspects of our lives.

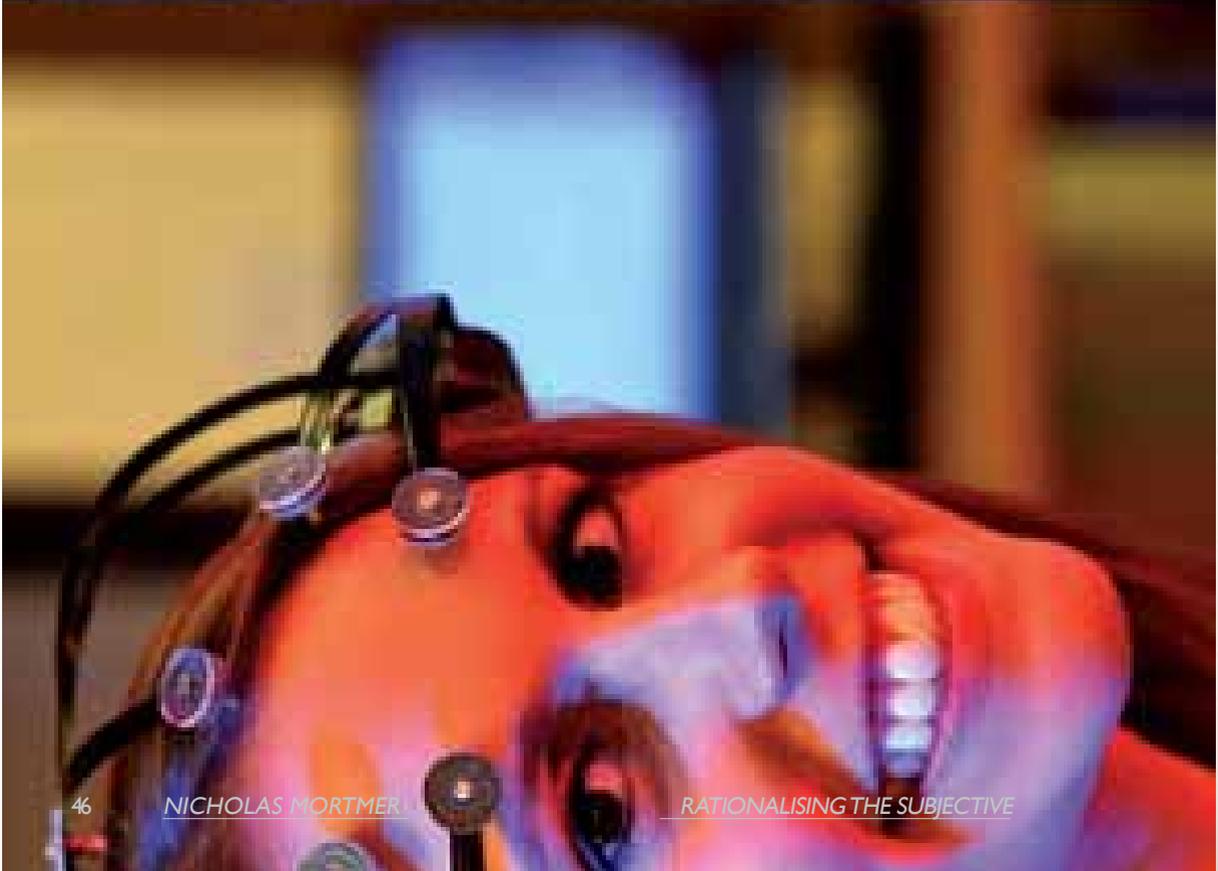
The field of Neuro-aesthetics looks at 'various approaches that involve the study of art from the point of view of perceptual physiology or cognitive science' and is arguably aiming to uncover the basis for aesthetic appreciation on a cellular level. Professor Semir Zeki, has gained a degree of publicity with his current research into the foundations of beauty, using experiments to seek out the areas in the brain which hold the key to certain aspects of this mode of perception. Whereas Ikebana operates as a practical art form, routed in both ritual and geometry, neuroaesthetics is a probing theoretical discipline, yet both have a desire to define a form of truth found within visual qualities, and their reactions.

The ambition to decode the human perception of beauty on a neurological level is on the fringes of more conventional research into brain functioning yet operates as an interesting example of the kinds of questions and consequences that emerge at the frontier of cognitive research. A science fiction future for neuro-aesthetic research could be a grading or new criticality within the visual arts, however the practice of neuroaesthetics has perhaps been utilised by a similarly speculative relation, but with a far more obvious motivation. The practise of neuro marketing has been gaining more





World's first full-brain,



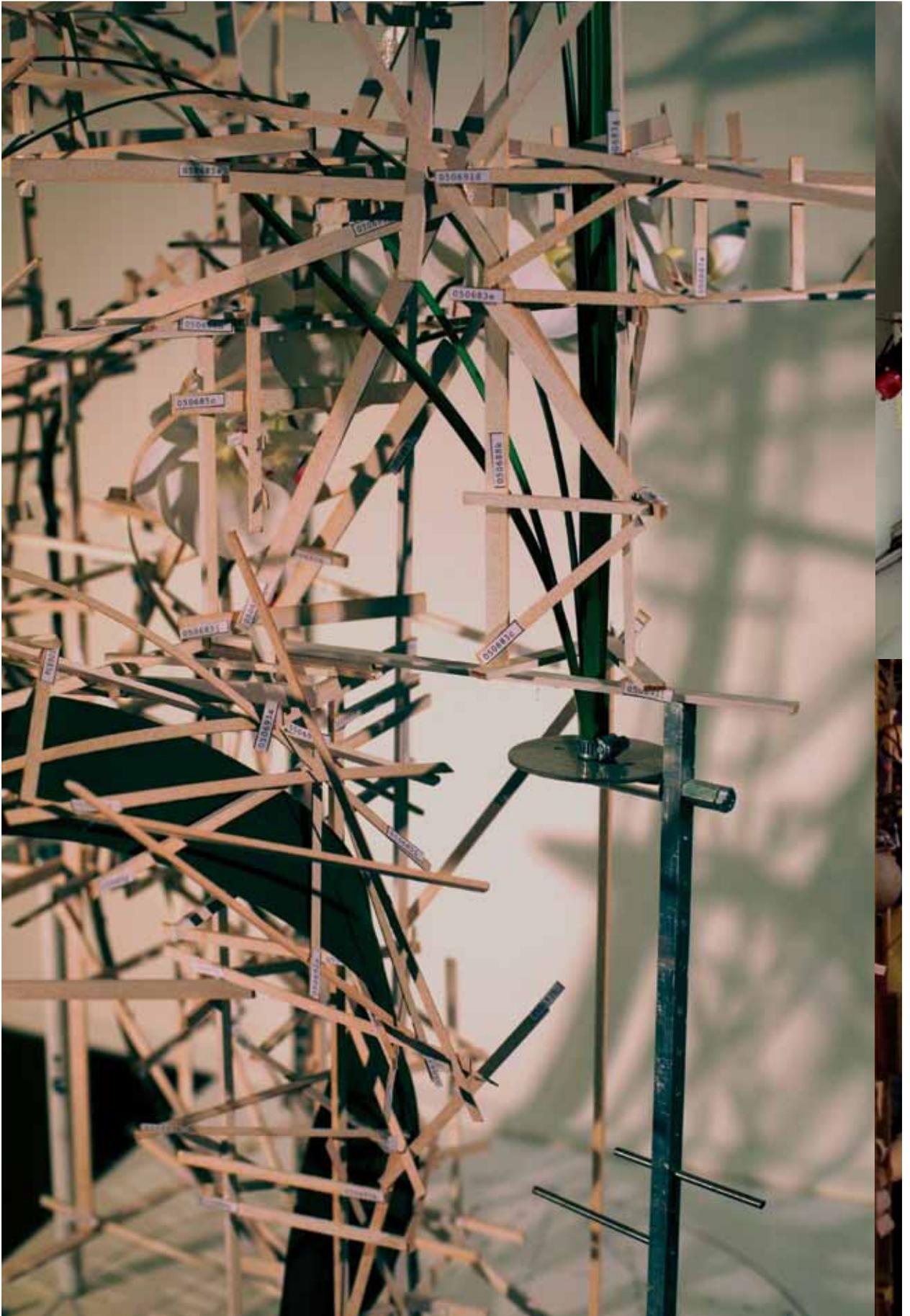
attention in certain circles as well as the ongoing ethical discussion surrounding the erosion of free will in contemporary digital culture. In simple terms, neuro marketing interprets neurological reactions to advertising stimuli in an effort to further understand the mind of the consumer and to re-engineer or tweak promotional material to perfect the design of a brand experience.

This can be seen as the obvious act two for an industry, which is founded on research from psychology and psychoanalysis, and it is of no surprise that the leaps made in the imaging and interpretation of our minds thoughts and actions would result in a commercial application within the 'dark arts' of advertising.

One layer of neuromarketing is the fascinating or terrifying prospect of a design process, which is being tailored to work subconsciously. Due to an objective, financial motivation, this is a system which operates with different outcomes to Ikebana yet can be seen to have a rigid format for design, albeit with contemporary, cultural and existing memes instead of cherry branches or chrysanthemums.

The rationale behind a physical and empirical embodiment of beauty or persuasion can also be viewed as moments where a technology and a sense of spirituality combine, in order to show some proof of concept, a statement of existence or to make sense of the world and its invisible forces. By considering the relationship that Ikebana and fringe neuroscience have to the formation of appealing and symbolic offerings, we can appreciate a determination to understand and utilise the foundations of visual pleasure as a method of status, power and control.

It is clear that with the world becoming a more complex place, the ability for science to provide a blueprint for an aesthetic experience could if achieved complicate things further. Whereas Ikebana operates on a subjective level with its built sets of rules, neuroaesthetics and neuro marketing offer a more objective outlook on creativity and its use value. What could the endgame be for the rationalising of our desires and aesthetic enjoyment, if we have an increasing amount of tools to aid a design process? The character portrayed in the enthusiast, is an individual who has combined tools and rituals of a designed perfection, and we see him lost in a quest for happiness or total fulfillment. The outcome of this is ambiguous - although his pursuit is all about a process, perhaps a reflection on what I find truly beautiful.





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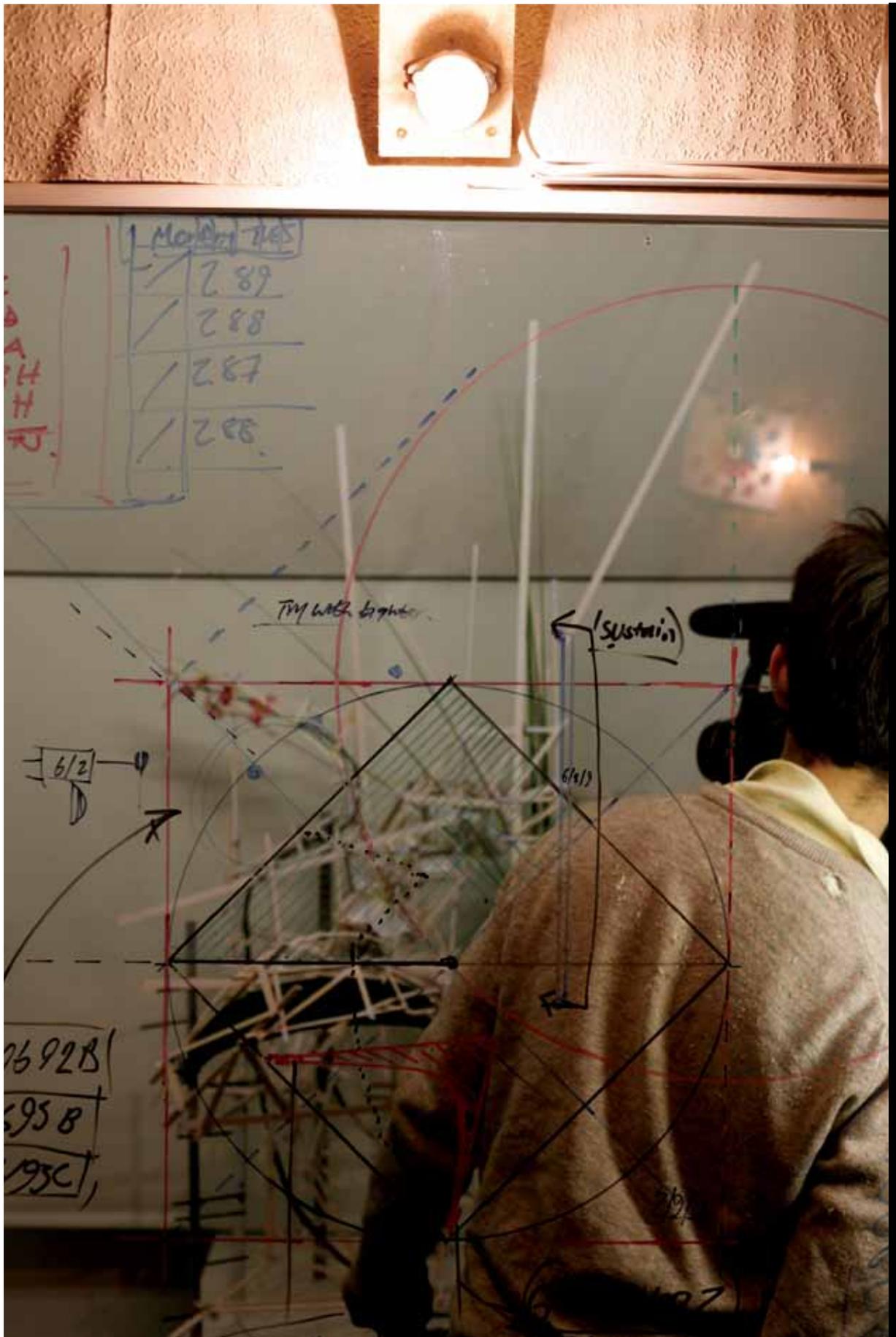
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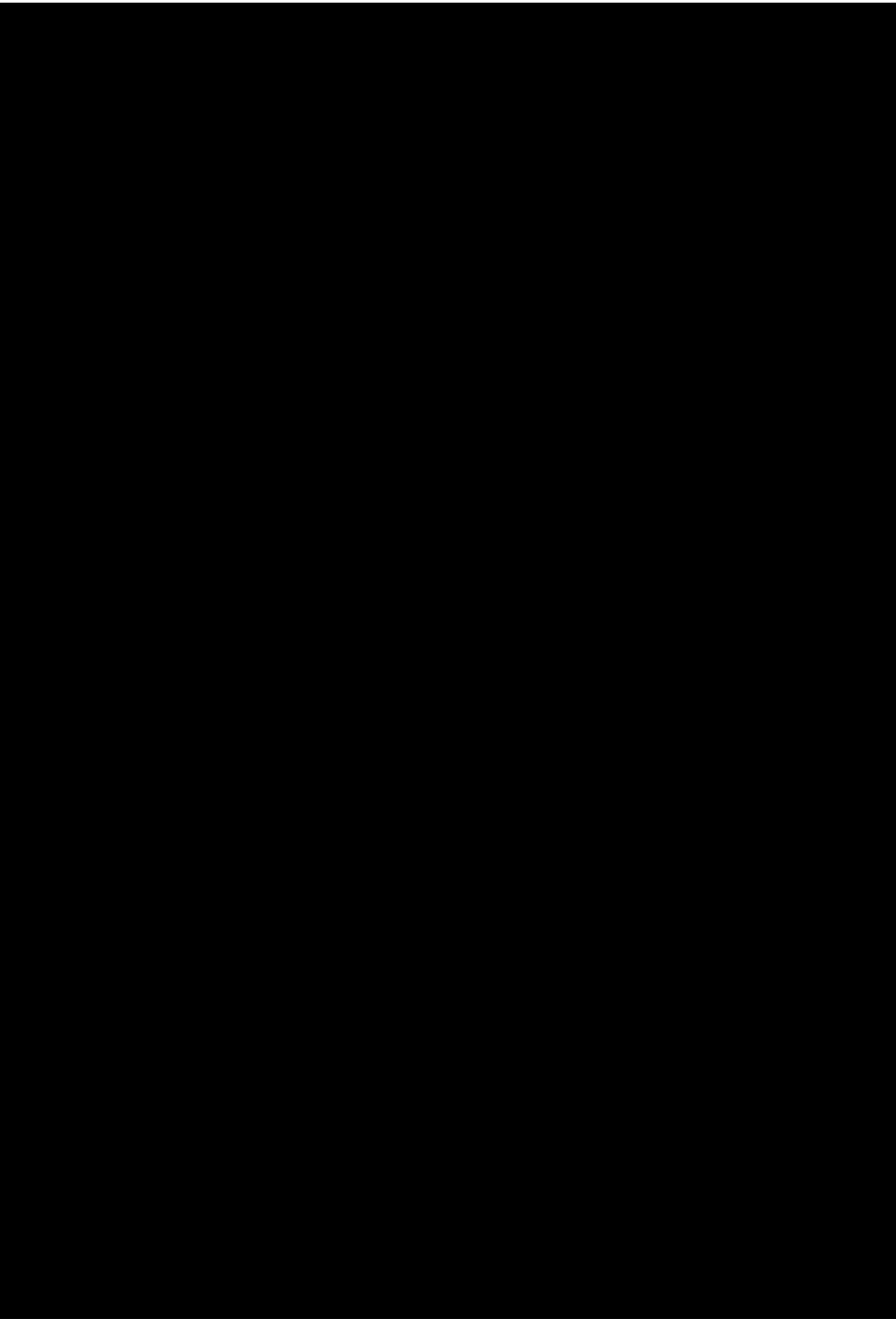
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THE ENTHUSIAST
a film by Nicholas Mortimer
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